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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 001217

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [NG](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGER: MEETING WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE  
RESTORATION OF PEACE

REF: A. NIAMEY 859  
[1](#)B. NIAMEY 625

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Classified By: Bernadette M. Allen, Ambassador, Reasons: 1.4 b & d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On September 26, Ambassador Allen met with the Government of Niger (GON) High Commissioner for the Restoration of Peace, Mohamed Anacko, to discuss the insecurity in northern Niger and to inquire whether the cessation of violence during Ramadan bodes well for possible future negotiations between the GON and the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ). Anacko remains very pessimistic that negotiations will take place any time soon and reported that GON President Tandja has rejected Anacko's offers to reach out to the MNJ. He also fears the MNJ may launch a more violent campaign against GON installations and security forces in northern Niger after Ramadan. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) To open the meeting, Ambassador asked Anacko about his well being, stating she recognized he must be under lots of pressure these past months. Anacko replied that he is indeed under lots of pressure, is very stressed and fearful that violence will resume immediately after Ramadan. Moreover, Anacko believes that Tandja no longer trusts him, as Tandja rarely speaks with Anacko (last meeting was almost two weeks ago) and he reportedly has ordered others to follow Anacko's and a handful of other influential Tuaregs' every move. Anacko said he is worried about his personal safety, given GON recent arrests of prominent Tuareg business types who have been labeled as suspected financiers of MNJ.

3) (C) Noting that a few weeks ago the Mayor of Tchizerone publicly announced he had joined the MNJ, Anacko was asked whether he believed it likely other leaders in the Agadez region or any leader who signed the 1995 Peace Accords would sign up with the MNJ. Anacko ruled out the possibility that leaders who previously signed the accords would sign up with the MNJ, but thinks it plausible other leaders in the Agadez region may be pushed in that direction if the GON continues to suspect, then arrest persons that have nothing to do with the MNJ. He said Tuaregs living outside the Agadez region are fearful of what may happen to family and friends. Most at risk in his view are persons of means, as the GON (primarily Tandja) too frequently wrongly suspects that such persons provide financial support for the MNJ. He speculated that if the GON continued to arrest persons without solid evidence, support for the MNJ could grow. He also believes that if the GON cannot protect the population in the Agadez region, such as stop the bus hijackings and robberies

(committed by criminals with no MNJ affiliation and who are taking advantage of insecurity in the region), support for the MNJ would increase. He added that the population in the region did not agree with the MNJ's rendering the region insecure with landmines, but the GON's inability to stop the MNJ from laying mines has a terrible psychological affect on residents in the region, leading them to believe without GON protection they easily could fall victim to MNJ attacks for not cooperating with MNJ.

¶4. (C) In response to a question about military and security forces' morale and possible interest in negotiating, Anacko stated that leaders in those services want to negotiate but, Tandja has blocked any efforts to do so. He said it's time to negotiate to stop the loss of life that has affected soldiers, MNJ rebels, civilians and livestock.

¶5. (C) In reply to a question as to why the MNJ believes the Agadez region should receive more mining revenues when the current law already provides 15 percent of mining revenues to that region, while other regions of the country are equally poor, Anacko responded that much of the nomadic population must live off the land. He said the GON sells off the grazing pastures without compensation to the pastoralists, thus leaving them no means to earn a living. He said it is not only Tuaregs who believe the GON has been unfair in this practice, that other ethnic groups complain about how concessions are being sold without consultation with traditional chiefs and without regard to the interests of indigenous populations. He said purchasers of concessions, such as the Chinese, don't hire locals. Moreover, citing as an example the outbreak of fighting at a national soccer match in Dosso that led to a gubernatorial change, Anacko added that most of the governing authorities have no attachment to the regions to which they are assigned, consequently don't care about funds leaving the regions to

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which they are assigned. He said the failure to proceed with the next phases of decentralization greatly contributes to tensions within regions.

¶6. (C) Ambassador then asked about the possibility of Tuareg rebel forces in Mali and Niger forming an alliance. Anacko replied that the Tuareg nation remains a dream, is not something one should expect to happen because Tuaregs love their respective countries. He said Nigerien Tuaregs would not consider themselves anything but Nigerien and Malian Tuaregs would only consider themselves Malian.

¶7. (C) Anacko concluded that until Tandja recognizes the MNJ as a political group, that the possibility for a mediated settlement of the conflict in northern Niger in the near term is slim.

MINIMIZED CONSIDERED.

ALLEN